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AUTHOR Browning, Philip L.
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ABSTRACT

Examined with 7 counselors and 28 mentally retarded clients were relationships among eight independent counselor, client and situational variables and four dependent variables of counselor empathy, respect, genuineness and concreteness, and client self-exploration. The dependent variables were derived from 315 3-minute tape recorded segments of counseling behavior rated by a team of four persons. Among findings were that counselors were the major source of differentiation and that counselors interacted with client level of intelligence, client age, length of sessions, and counseling stages. (LS)

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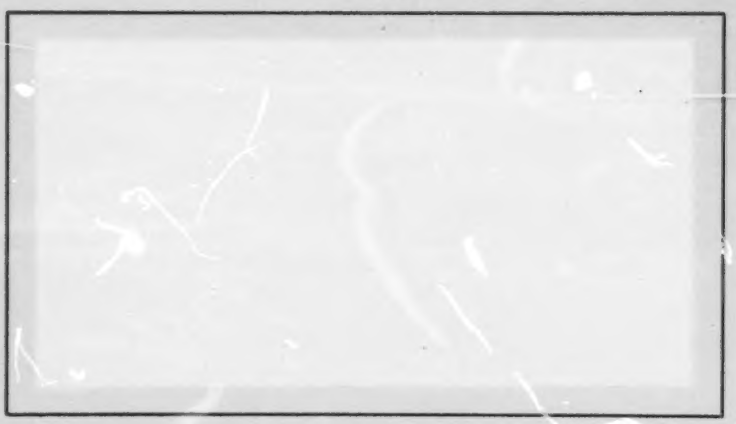

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WORKING PAPER NO. 76

CORRELATES OF THE COUNSELING PROCESS WITH RETARDED CLIENTS

Philip L. Browning

July, 1974

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Abstract

Counselor empathy, respect, genuineness and concreteness, and client self-exploration were examined with 7 counselors and 28 mentally retarded clients. Results are discussed in terms of counselor, client and situational variables and their relationship to each other in the counseling process.

Correlates of the Counseling Process with Retarded Clients

Limited attention has been given to investigating the counseling process with mentally retarded clients (Halpern, 1966; Bialer, 1967; Browning & Butler, 1970; and Browning, 1974). One exception was a 3-year research project conducted (Ayer & Butler, 1969) at the University of Wisconsin, the purpose of which was to assess client-counselor communication and to identify critical variables and their correlates in the counseling process.

The purpose of this study, which was one of six that evolved from the above project, was to explore counselor, client and situational variables and their relationship to each other within the counseling process. Counselor variables such as empathy, respect, genuineness and concreteness, and the client variable of self-exploration were the primary process conditions investigated.

Method

The 28 retarded clients represented in this study were selected on a stratified basis from a population of 71 retarded clients served through the University of Wisconsin counseling project. The stratification is reflected in a 3 x 3 completely crossed factorial design where the factors were counselors (factor 1), client intelligence level (factor 2) and length of counseling (factor 3). Each of the 7 counselors had 4 clients, two of whom were of low IQ and two of high IQ, and two short-term and two long-term cases. In other words, the 4 clients of each counselor belonged

to mutually exclusive categories: (a) low IQ and short-term, (b) low IQ and long-term, (c) high IQ and short-term and (d) high IQ and long-term.

There were eight assigned independent variables for counselor, client and situational conditions. The two counselor variables were counselors (N = 7) and counselor sex (male, N = 5; female, N = 2). The three client variables were intellectual level (low IQ, $\bar{X}$ = 55, S.D. = 5, N = 14; high IQ, $\bar{X}$ = 76, S.D. = 10, N = 14), age (young, $\bar{X}$ = 12.8, S.D. = 1.4, N = 18; old, $\bar{X}$ = 16.3, S.D. = 1.6, N = 10) and sex (male, N = 14; female, N = 14). The three situational variables were length of counseling and two stages of counseling. As for length, short-term consisted of 10 sessions for 14 clients and long-term, 16 sessions for 7 clients and 24 sessions for the remaining 7 clients. Stage 2 of counseling consisted of sessions 2, 6 and 9 for all 28 clients. Stage 2 pertained to early, middle and late sessions (E, M, L). Sessions 2, 6 and 9 represented E, M, L for 14 short-term clients, whereas sessions 2, 9 and 16 or 24 represented E, M, L for 14 long-term clients.

The dependent variables consisted of four counselor scales--empathy, respect, genuineness and concreteness--and one client scale--self-exploration. Each of the scales used to measure the counselor-client interpersonal process conditions had been derived from already developed scales (Truax & Carkhuff, 1967). The revised scales used in this study are reported elsewhere (Carkhuff, 1969).

The dependent variables were derived from tape recorded segments of counseling behavior for 28 mentally retarded clients and 7 counselors. The number of counseling sessions for each client ranged from 10 to 24. For

each counseling session selected for this study, there were three 3-minute taped segments representing the early, middle and late part of that session. Sessions 2, 6 and 9 were selected for 28 clients; 14 and 7 of these clients had an additional three segments for sessions 16 and 24, respectively. Thus, there was a total of 315 3-minute taped units of counseling behavior.

These 315 3-minute segments, which were placed in random order on 11 large tape reels, were used for rating the process measures of empathy, respect, genuineness, concreteness and self-exploration. The ratings were done by a team of four persons at the University of New York at Buffalo who were trained to rate these five counseling process scales.

The inter-rater reliability for the five scales was determined by the Pearson-Product Moment Correlation. The Spearman-Brown Prophecy formula was then used to estimate the reliability of all four raters combined. The relationship between the five counseling process scales was also determined by the same correlation coefficient. Finally, two-way and four-dimensional, completely crossed factorial designs were used to test main effects and first order interactions (The University of Wisconsin Computer Center Programs STATJOB TWO-WAY 1 and C-4 WISC ANOVA).

Results

The inter-rater reliabilities for the five counseling dependent measures are reported in Table 1. Table 2 presents the relationship between these same dependent measures.

Insert Tables 1 and 2

The results of the main effect hypotheses are reported in Table 3.

Insert Table 3

Significant main effects occurred for five of the eight assigned independent variables and three of these were significant with all five counseling process scales.

Table 4 shows that significant first order interactions occurred for 4 of the 12 possible first order interacting conditions and 2 of these

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Insert Table 4

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were significant with all counseling process scales.

Discussion

The results support the position that counseling is not unidimensional in that there were significant differences among and interactions between counselors, clients and situational conditions with respect to the five dependent process variables. However, the high correlation between these dependent variables suggest that they were measuring, at least in part, the same construct. This may help explain why significant main effects and first order interactions most often resulted for all the dependent measures. Thus, rather than discuss the results in terms of each dependent scale and the counseling process dimensions they were intended to measure, attention will be directed to the assigned independent variables.

Counselors were the major source of differentiation. In addition to the individual variability between the seven counselors, significant

differences resulted between male and female counselors on all dependent measures. Nevertheless, counselor sex by client sex interaction occurred only for the client scale of self-exploration (S-E). This finding was interesting since there was no main effect for client sex. A cross-over interaction showed that male clients did not differ between male and female counselors on client level of S-E, whereas, female clients had significantly higher and lower levels of S-E with male and female counselors respectively. One explanation for this finding is that the Catholic residential training school was almost completely staffed by Sisters. Thus, the girls were possibly more responsive to male counselors since they related almost exclusively with female staff.

Counselors also interacted with client level of intelligence (high vs. low IQ). The fact that three of the seven counselors demonstrated higher level facilitative conditions for the lower IQ level clients questions the assumption posed by Truax (1966):

> ...most counselors and therapists believe that prognosis is poor for clients with low intellectual capacity. It seems almost inevitable that a counselor would communicate pessimism to such patients as well as lower conditions, because he believed he could not help them. His lower level of therapeutic conditions, in turn, would lead to poorer outcome and thereby confirm his original pessimism [pp. 94-95].

Finally, counselors interacted with two situational conditions, i.e., length (short vs. long-term) and stage (sessions 2, 6 and 9) of counseling. Counselors differed in levels of conditions between short and long-term clients, i.e., some counselors showed higher levels of counselor conditions for long-term clients whereas others showed higher conditions for short-term clients. Counselors were the sole determiners as to whether a client should receive extended counseling beyond 10 sessions. Even though the basis on which that decision was made is unknown, one speculation is that

some counselors recommended continued sessions for the more self-exploratory clients with whom they best empathized. In this situation the counselor chose to work with "good" clients who showed the most promise and with whom they best related. The reverse of this might have been the case for some counselors in that they recommended further counseling for those who had shown the least progress (self-exploration) and with whom they had yet to establish a more desirable relation.

The final interaction between counselors and sessions 2, 6 and 9 showed that on the measures of genuineness and concreteness, five of the seven counselors had condition levels similar for sessions 2 and 9. However, two of these counselors had significantly higher scores for session 6 when compared to sessions 2 and 9. Furthermore, three of these counselors had significantly lower scores for session 6 when compared to sessions 2 and 9. Initial counselor expectation could have helped contribute to this finding in that some clients might have exceeded counselor expectation whereas others might have failed to meet up to it. The terminal date of session 10 might also have been an influential factor in the lowering or raising of conditions.

Significant differences on the dependent counseling process dimensions were found for client age and level of intelligence. In essence, both counselor and client process scores were higher for both the older and higher IQ clients. No interactions occurred with age whereas client IQ interacted with counselors on all scales and stage of counseling for the scale of concreteness.

Significant differences on the dependent counseling process dimensions did not occur for the two situational conditions of stage of counseling.

Only client self-exploration was related to length of counseling, i.e., the long-term clients were more self-exploratory than short-term clients. As for interaction, stage of counseling (sessions 2, 6 and 9) interacted with counselors (as discussed) and client IQ on three counselor process conditions.

Even though significant differences occurred between both counselors and clients, everyone scored relatively low on the counseling process dimensions. Considering that the clients were mentally retarded, the actual meaning of these low level counseling conditions in comparison with more verbal clients is difficult to interpret since (a) the language used for defining the anchor points on each of the scales characterize middle class verbal type responses (Carkhuff & Berenson, 1967), and (b) the raters had no experience in rating mentally retarded clients or counselors working with these persons.

Most studies on counseling the retarded have attempted to answer the question, "Is counseling effective?" without considering process variables such as those investigated in this study. Such outcome research ignores the fact that counseling, the independent variable, is multidimensional. It is equally disadvantageous, however, to investigate the process of counseling without outcome considerations. The ideal solution to this problem is research which relates the counseling process to outcome.

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Table 1

Inter-Rater Reliabilities for Counselor and Client Process Scales

Scales	Rater 1-3	Rater 2-4	$\bar{r}$	Spearman Brown
Empathy	.62	.93	.79	.88
Genuineness	.40	.89	.69	.82
Respect	.47	.79	.65	.79
Concreteness	.42	.49	.46	.64
Self-Exploration	.52	.73	.63	.77

Table 2

Pearson Product Moment Correlations

Between Counselor and Client Process Scales

	Empathy	Respect	Genuineness	Concreteness	Self-Exploration
Empathy	1.00	.89	.85	.81	.65
Respect		1.00	.92	.77	.57
Genuineness			1.00	.75	.52
Concreteness				1.00	.61
Self-Exploration					1.00
Mean	1.67	1.83	1.86	1.76	1.60
S.D.	.47	.52	.51	.49	.48

Table 3

Significant Main Effects (alpha $\geq$ .05)

with Counselor and Client Process Scales

Independent Variables	Dependent Variables				
	Counselor				Client
	Empathy	Genuineness	Respect	Concreteness	Self-Exploration
Counselors (seven)	X*	X	X	X	X
Counselor (male-female)	X	X	X	X	X
Client Therapy Age (young-old)	X	X	X	X	X
Level of Intelligence (low-high)	X			X	X
Length of Counseling (short-long)					X
Client Sex (male-female)					
Stage of Counseling (session 2, 6, 9)					
Stage of Counseling (early-middle-late)					

*There was a significant difference between the seven counselors on the empathy measure.

Table 4

Significant (alpha $\geq$ .05) First Order Interactions

with Counselor and Client Process Scales

Independent Variables	Dependent Variables				
	Counselor				Client
	Empathy	Genuineness	Respect	Concreteness	Self-Exploration
Counselors X IQ	X*	X	X	X	X
Counselors X Length of Counseling	X	X	X	X	X
Counselor sex X client sex					X
Counselors X Stage of Counseling (2, 6, 9)		X		X	
IQ X Stage of Counseling (2, 6, 9)				X	
IQ X Length of Counseling					
IQ X Stage of Counseling (E, M, L)					
Client Age X Stage of Counseling (E, M, L)					
Length of Counseling X Stage of Counseling (2, 6, 9)					
Length of Counseling X Stage of Counseling (E, M, L)					
Counselor X Stage of Counseling (E, M, L)					
Stage of Counseling (2, 6, 9) X Stage of Counseling (E, M, L)					

*There was a significant first order interaction between counselor and client IQ level on the empathy measure.